

Fall 2018 Diversity Scholarship Recipient: Annet Rangel



Hello from Seattle, Washington! I am currently writing to you from my desk job at Seattle University. Unlike most days in Seattle filled with clouds and rain, today there is actually sun and blue skies making me feel anxious to get outside when my shift ends. Assuming that the iPhone weather app has not been outrageously wrong, it seems like y'all in Amsterdam can relate.

If you didn't already know, my name is Annet Rangel. I was born in Mexico and moved to the U.S. with my mom and sister when I was five years old. I spent most of that time in Southern California in the small suburb of Mission Viejo. For the past four years however, I have been living in Seattle while attending Seattle University to get a degree in Communication Studies with a minor in Sociology. When I'm not studying (because that really does take up most of my time), I spend most of my extra time organizing with community groups like E.P.I.C. (Ending the Prison Industrial Complex) and Y.U.R.I. (Youth Undoing Institutional Racism), as we work to stop the city of Seattle from building a new youth jail right down the street from my school campus. With whatever little time I have left, I like to make music, prep for shows with my improv team, watch movies from the criterion collection, or go skateboarding with friends.

In roughly 14 days, I'll be graduating from Seattle University. Even though I have been planning to continue my studies by going to law school for the past several years, it was not until very recently that I thought about taking a year off before continuing on my career path. When my mother took a trip to Amsterdam this past summer, she suggested that during my gap year I study at one of the schools there. After some research, we found the Semester in Amsterdam Program offered by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam which seemed like the perfect fit. It grants students the opportunity to obtain another minor in only one semester, it fulfills my desire to study abroad in a country different from the ones where I grew up, and it also offers scholarship awards which make the program affordable. Beyond these reasons, the Law and Global Society Minor Program is perfect for me because it allows me to explore perspectives of borders, nationality, and immigration which differ from the U.S.

This semester, my goal is to try and integrate myself as much as possible in the community around Vrije Universiteit and Amsterdam. Whether that is befriending people at the skate park, creating study groups, or auditioning for Boom Chicago to continue performing improv while I'm there, I want to try my best to learn about Dutch culture and their views. Additionally, I want to make an effort to find organizing groups and connect with other prison abolitionist organizers around the globe to see what strategies they use. I'm curious to see if organizers in Amsterdam also connect prison systems to colonization in their organizing in the same way that organizers from colonized lands often do. Finally, I hope to get a different kind of education while I am in Amsterdam. Having only gone to school in the U.S., I have had an education that primarily focuses on the U.S. and its relationship to other countries from its own perspective.

I hope that my time at Vrije Universiteit will introduce me to new individuals and ideas that my geographical location and culture have not made available to me. I am curious to see how people react to me being Mexican or Queer. What assumptions do people in Amsterdam have about either of those identities? Will they be shocked to see someone who does not fit their idea of someone from Mexico like they are in the U.S.? Are they open to the LGBTQ community, and are there specific areas of the city that would offer me a better opportunity to build relationships with the Queer community of Amsterdam? I am beyond excited to find the answers to these questions and find new questions while I am there. See you soon Vrije Universiteit!